



KYRGYZ REPUBLIC TRANSITION INITIATIVE (KRTI)



2010-2013



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC TRANSITION INITIATIVE (KRTI) 2010-2013



"This illustration was initially used to mobilize support for KRTI's clean up and renovation campaign. The tree's roots symbolize KRTI's local partners, who are working to build a stronger, more democratic Kyrgyzstan. The branches and leaves represent the results of these partnerships, which together form the shape of Kyrgyzstan."

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TIMELINE

CURRENT EVENTS

April 2010

Protests in Talas spread to Bishkek on April 7

Interim Government takes over

Interim President Otunbaeva succeeds

President Bakiyev

June 2010

Ethnic unrest results in more than 400 dead
and 400,000 displaced

Referendum establishes new constitution

Interim Government launches reconstruction
in the South and establishes State Directorate
for Reconstruction and Development

October 2010

Parliamentary elections

New ruling coalition forms, Atambaev
named Prime Minister

January 2011

Government report concludes June 2010 events
were aimed at "disrupting the unity of its people"

March 2011

Government establishes Public Advisory Boards
in all government agencies to provide opportunities
for public consultation

April 2011

First anniversary of protests

May 2011

Isolated conicts over electricity in Suzak

June 2011

First anniversary of ethnic unrest
Kurultai approves President's draft of ethnic policy
Parliament approves a competing version
of ethnic policy

July 2011

Controversial judge selection process launches
Selection process halts amid public criticism

October 2011

Presidential elections

Parliamentary coalition collapses, Babanov
named Prime Minister

KRTI

- USAID/OTI conducts assessment on April 12
- KRTI program launches on May 7
- Provides equipment and training to critical oces within the Interim Government
- Supports a national campaign for peace and unity
- Refocuses approach and launches significant programming in the South
- Supports the expansion of national reconstruction efforts to the South
- Initiates rehabilitation of public spaces to demonstrate tangible benets of the transition and document recovery
- Raises awareness of election-related security issues
- Provides short-term employment around election period
- Holds trainings in conict mitigation techniques and researched the role of community perceptions of conict
- Assists the newly formed Public Advisory Boards through outreach campaigns and trainings
- Launches the "Renewal Campaign" in Bishkek engaging over 1,000 citizens in public works projects throughout the spring, often a season of protest
- Boosts electricity to key communities and provides transformers
- Expands the "Renewal Campaign" to the South and mobilizes over 2,500 citizens in public works projects
- Supports an information campaign calling for transparency in the judicial selection process
- Fills critical gaps in electoral assistance including support for observers and providing multi-lingual transcripts of key debates

CURRENT EVENTS

December 2011

Interim President Otunbaeva transfers power to President Elect Atambaev

First peaceful transition of power in Central Asia

February 2012

Government establishes Anti-Corruption Service and calls for civil society participation

March 2012

Government announces "One-Stop Shops" as local centers to increase ease of access to public services

July 2012

Controversial housing demolition starts in Osh additional streets slated for demolition

August 2012

Parliamentary ruling coalition collapses

September 2012

New coalition formed

Satybaldiev named Prime Minister

October 2012

Opposition Parliamentarians hold protests at White House

November 2012

Local council elections

January 2013

President signs "**National Strategy for Sustainable Development**" Ethnic unrest around Sokh enclave

February 2013

Government presents report to UN Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

March 2013

Government participates in roundtable on street widening in Osh

April 2013

President Atambayev signs new ethnic policy

May 2013

Protests in Issyk-kul and Jalalabad related to Kumtor gold mine State of Emergency declared State Agency for Local Self-Governance and Inter-ethnic Relations established

KRTI

- Hosts public hearings and circulates information on anti-corruption plans, focusing on the oversight of nance, energy and mining
- Expands reach and streamlines services of newly formed "One-Stop Shop" in Osh t hrough an information campaign
- Equip the Oce of the Prosecutor General with trainings on strategic communication to lead the way in providing transparent information
- Provides legal support to residents adversely affected by street widening; encouraging more inclusive processes in the future
- Fills critical gaps in electoral assistance by supporting observers and voter registration
- Prepares for winter and supports consumer rights and transparency in the energy sector
- Assists local government around Sokh enclave to develop plans to mitigate and respond to conict
- Supports the participation of civil society in the UN Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Assists local government in aected areas to develop plans to mitigate and respond to protests
- Supports Government to solicit public opinion on the Strategic Plan for Local Government and rollout the new ethnic policy

KRTI INTRODUCTION

Popular demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 brought a swift and unexpected end to the regime of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, and the establishment of an interim provisional government.

Recognizing the importance of this transition and of Kyrgyzstan's potential, the United States Government called upon the comparative advantages of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives to launch the Kyrgyz Republic Transition Initiative (KRTI). The program was designed to rapidly augment the established USAID development portfolio in order to better respond to the different and dynamic context.

Ethnic violence flared in southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad in June 2010, destabilizing the country,

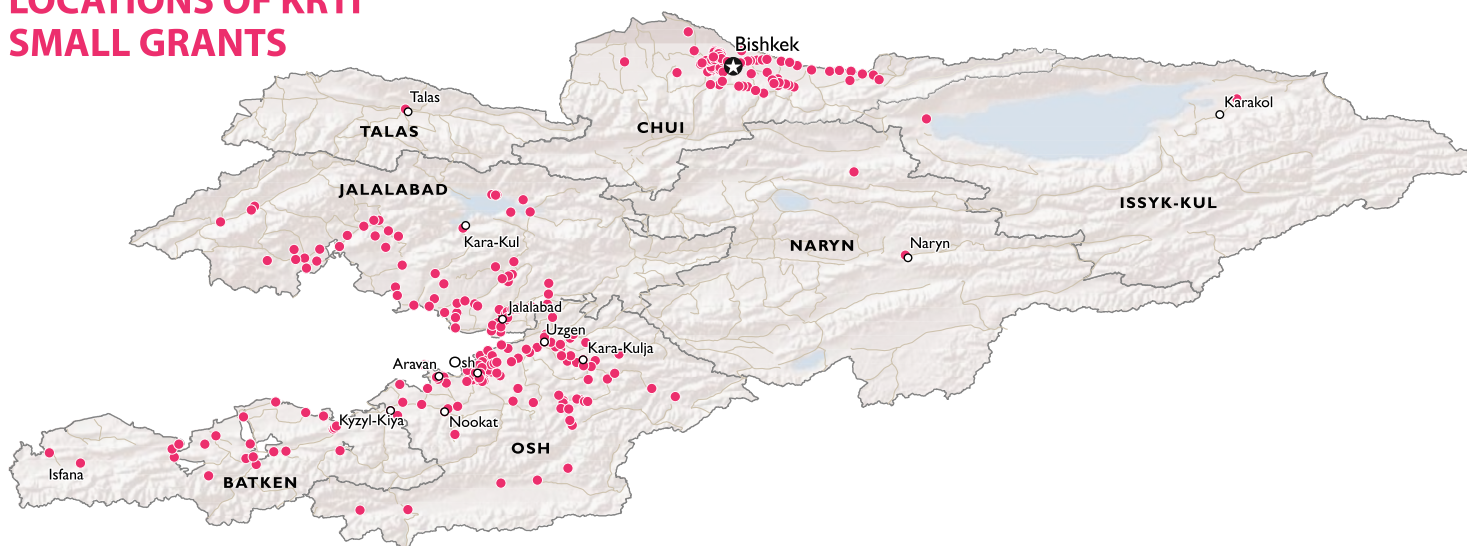
resulting in hundreds of deaths and displacing as many as 400,000 citizens. The new USAID program was poised to rapidly shift gears and respond appropriately.

Despite the civil strife in the south, the country managed successfully to hold a constitutional referendum transferring significant power from the President to the country's legislature, the Jorgoku Kenesh. In the next three years it successfully achieved a number of other key democratic milestones, including Parliamentary, Presidential, and local elections. With the successful completion of the political transition, the country began the long process of reform.

Throughout the three year transition, KRTI aimed to support

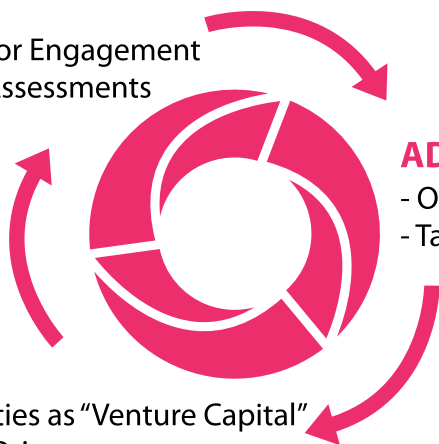
the democratic transition at the national and local level and respond to critical sources of instability that threatened to derail the political process. The program provided small grants to government, civil society, and private sector partners to implement high-impact, short-term projects in volatile communities, targeting the most critical issues, while laying the groundwork for longer-term development. Throughout the life of the program, KRTI exhibited hallmark flexibility, implementing nearly 450 activities totaling more than \$20 million, in partnership with nearly 300 local partners. Together these projects have helped to reinforce stability, and strengthen the foundation on which to create an inclusive, accountable, and stable democracy.

LOCATIONS OF KRTI SMALL GRANTS



ASSESS

- Criteria for Engagement
- Rolling Assessments



ADAPT

- Ongoing Decision-Making
- Target Strategic Opportunities

ACT

- Activities as "Venture Capital"
- Field Driven

KRTI was implemented by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). OTI provides fast and flexible support through an iterative cycle of program planning.

The following pages provide selected examples of some of KRTI's key achievements and help to illustrate the program's approach and evolution. Among its successes, KRTI and its local partners have:

- Helped government to deliver tangible results in volatile communities, building public confidence that positive change was happening and creating space for the newly established interim government to fulfill its mandate;
- Mitigated the potential for continued violence between ethnicities, celebrated the country's diversity, and championed institutional inclusion and the development of a common civic identity;
- Maintained flexibility and utilized ongoing contextual awareness to better leverage new opportunities in support of positive "agents of change" and help them rapidly respond to instability as it emerged within their communities;
- Made modest but tangible improvements against seemingly insurmountable

USAID/OTI FUNDED

440+ small grants for **\$20M+** going directly to....



Funds Leveraged from Outside Sources

Other

Grantee



\$8.1M

USAID/OTI



\$20M

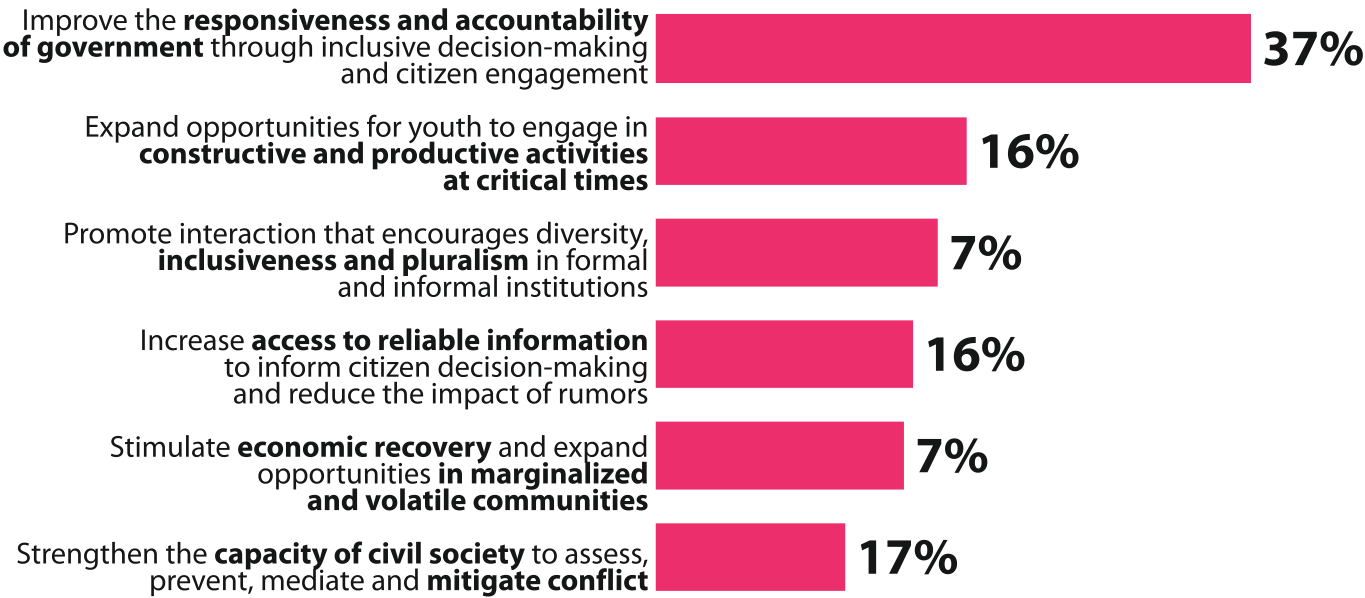
problems – like citizens' personal safety and security – that when aggregated, translate into significant progress toward the longer-term solutions;

- Identified and helped magnify the work of key actors addressing the most pressing "make-or-break" issues, like transparency of the energy sector;
- Helped develop the professionalism and

independence of the media industry, while helping fledgling media actors better channel the voice of and reach marginalized populations;

- Utilized innovative approaches to develop alternatives to violence for marginalized, at-risk populations; and
- Filled a critical gap in support of more accountable and inclusive local governance and service delivery.

TYPE OF SMALL GRANTS





BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN CHANGE THROUGH TANGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS



Much of Kyrgyzstan's Soviet-era infrastructure has steadily deteriorated over the past 20 years, owing to poor maintenance, government budgetary constraints, financial mismanagement, and revenue loss due to corruption. The 2010 outbreaks of popular discontent and ethnic violence worsened the country's economic woes. The disparity between urban and rural citizens, combined with competition for limited resources – land, energy, water, jobs, access to basic health and education services – exacerbates the long-standing tensions among Kyrgyzstan's ethnic, geographical, rural-urban, and economic divides.

While the revolution in 2010 was complex in nature, many felt a new optimism in its aftermath.

Nationwide, people wanted immediate tangible changes to match their expectations for a better future. In the south, so recently wracked by ethnic violence, communities needed to see evidence that the new interim government was capable of protecting their interests and committed to rapidly rebuilding destroyed communities. The extensive damage to government facilities, coupled with the necessary learning curve of newly-created government agencies and procedures, understandably limited the government's ability to move quickly and rebuild.

During the early days of the transition, KRTI partnered with a wide variety of key government actors to deliver tangible improvements, stimulate

economic recovery by injecting money into the local communities by creating short-term jobs, issuing contracts for rehabilitating small-scale infrastructure, and procuring equipment and other material. The approach centered on helping local government and civil society partners mobilize a cross-section of community members in the most volatile areas to identify priority infrastructure rehabilitation projects. Communities were selected and projects designed to target the greatest sources of instability. These interventions also laid the groundwork for increased cooperation among communities for mutual benefit.

These tangible projects helped to create an environment that enabled democratic transition

3.7M \$
Value of Equipment Provided

18



**Critical
Government
Offices**

44



**Intersections
with traffic
lights**

138



**Educational
Facilities**

by building citizens' confidence that real change was underway. This confidence was necessary to allow the national government get back on its feet and allow public officials at all levels to be democratically elected and begin to "deliver" on their democratic promises of greater accountability, transparency, and inclusivity.

Rebuilding Public Spaces

The KRTI - supported community-driven projects took a variety of forms. Early projects included providing immediate equipment to key national institutions like the President's office, parliament, and the State Directorate for Reconstruction and Development. Soon after, the program focused on the rehabilitation of shared public infrastructure such as streets lights, traffic lights and irrigation canals that were critical for public safety and rural livelihoods. Additionally, KRTI supported improvements to common public spaces, like city parks, where people interact with their neighbors. Other initiatives improved sports facilities, youth centers, and schools to better engage young people in constructive activities. Still other projects focused on rehabilitating critical buildings like document and passport

offices to help citizens access better services, and local council meeting halls where local governments could meet more regularly with citizens to discuss community priorities.

"The real impact of these rehabilitated facilities and the work that made it all happen has transformed people's mindsets in the south, changing peoples' attitudes, and inspired hope. Visible improvements in their communities have helped move people past the recent conflicts."
Osh resident

Delfin Park is located in the heart of Osh City, set between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. This particular park sparks fond memories for many of the city's multi-ethnic residents, as it was where they all played as children. By 2010 the park was nearly abandoned, the tennis courts had fallen into disrepair, and public spaces were overgrown with weeds and bushes. The floors of the two basketball gyms were warped and the ceiling was cracked and leaking.

One of KRTI's first projects in the south supported Tuura Kadam, a youth-focused NGO, to bring together ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek young people over a three-week period to clean up

the park and prepare a site for the installation of a new soccer field. KRTI hired local construction firms to install new playground equipment, benches, and a soccer field; and renovate the tennis courts and two gyms. This project not only rehabilitated a symbolic recreational facility in the heart of the city, it provided laborers with much needed income, and helped to restore a sense of community cohesion in the immediate aftermath of the violence.

"After tragic events, communities became more isolated from each other. There is a necessity to find points of contact and short-term employment activities become one of the efficient tools for it. Working together creates feeling of trust between people and hopes for peace. Another important factor of the project – it helps to raise family income of vulnerable unemployed people."
Sultan Karakozhoev, the Head of Tuura Kadam, a partner.

In Bishkek, KRTI supported seven similar efforts to clean up parks and other public areas, and install playgrounds in low-income areas. During the run-up to the one-year anniversaries of the 2010 April and June violence and the Presidential election in October of 2011, KRTI mobilized

thousands of young people into cleanup campaigns and supported activities at youth centers and sports halls throughout the country in order to keep them constructively occupied and off the streets.

Despite a spate of interethnic violence in Maevka in May 2010, local youth from different ethnic groups were mobilized to improve their community. Led by the NGO Child's Rights Defenders League, the community and local government decided that rehabilitating nearly three kilometers of road in the community of Tendik was a shared priority and would help improve people's lives. With support from KRTI and a professional construction company, more than 60 unemployed young men, aged 18 to 28, worked together to fix the road. This project provided temporary employment and demonstrated how working together can improve community infrastructure and change attitudes. In the near future, the local government plans to extend the road work, install street lights, and open a training center and a village police department that will improve security for residents.

"These activities address social and economic priorities, improve people's lives, foster inter-ethnic cooperation, and build trust between communities and local government."
Nazgul Turdubekova, head of the Child's Rights Defenders League

64



Parks

14



Sports
Complexes

18



Youth Centers

1,962



Street Lights



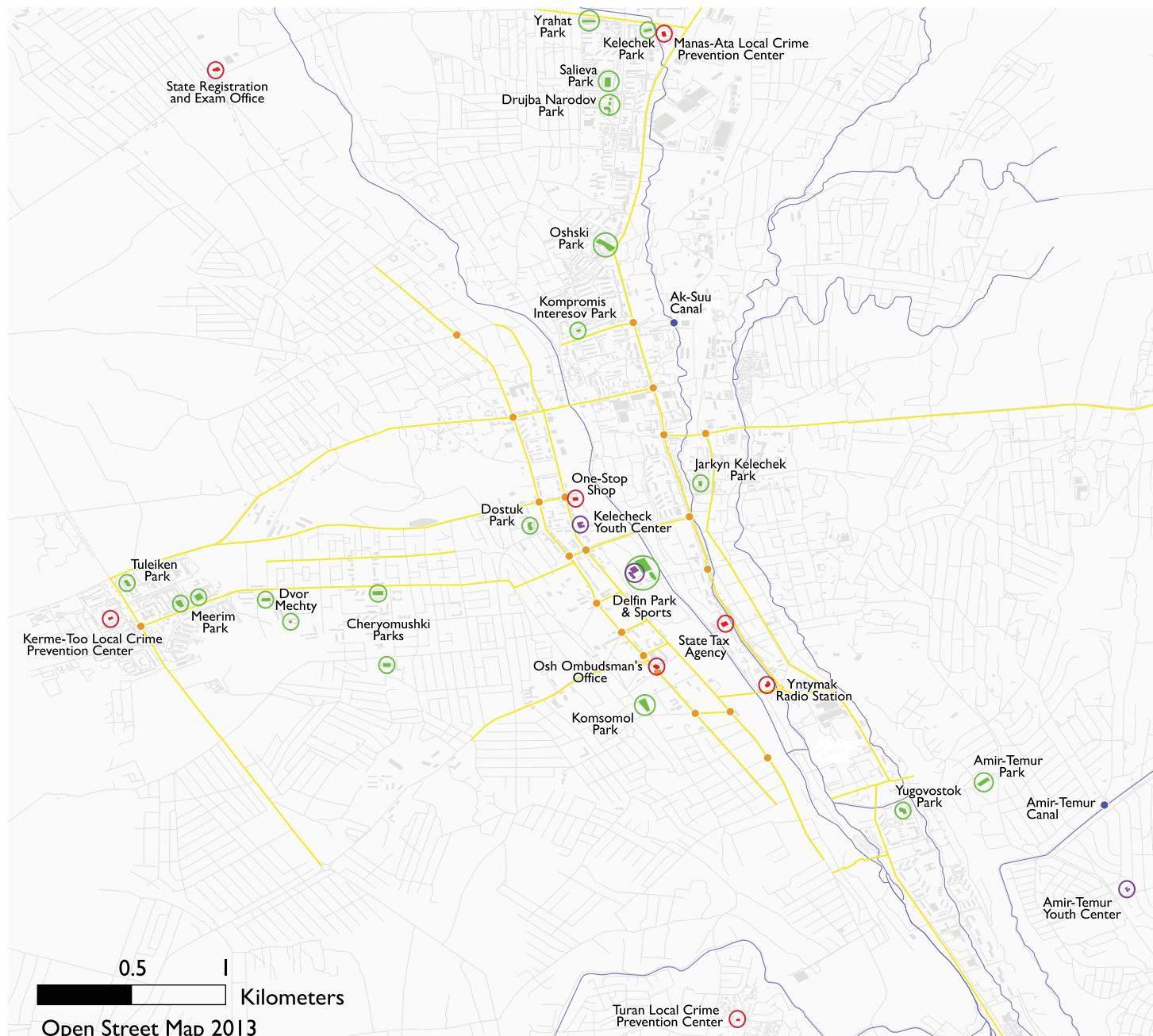
280
150 ↑

Increase in the # of Local
Shops after Street Light
Installations



278
Kilometers
of Irrigation
Canal

MAP OF KRTI INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS IN OSH



● State Government Offices

● Youth Centers & Sports Complexes

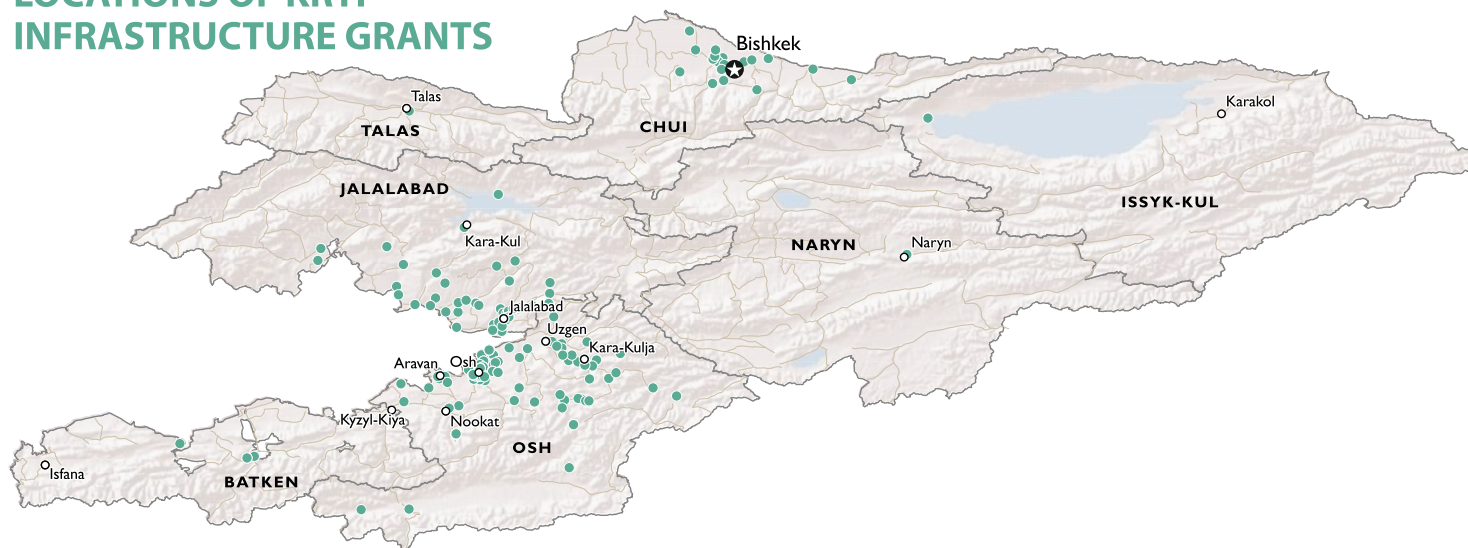
● Canals

● Parks

● Traffic Lights

— Streetlights

LOCATIONS OF KRTI INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS



Increasing Access to Scarce Resources in Volatile Communities

A lack of economic opportunities is routinely cited as the primary grievance of citizens across the country. The massive network of Soviet-era irrigation canals has been poorly maintained over the last two decades, dramatically reducing water flow and crop production in rural communities. Additionally, KRTI-funded research identified access to and competition over limited irrigation water as one of the most significant flashpoints between communities.

Over the life of KRTI, the program has rehabilitated nearly 30 irrigation canals that serve more than 80 communities across the south.

In Kara-Suu district, farmers reported a 30% increase in their corn yield and 25% more wheat harvested after the renovation. They also noted that access to more water had reduced ethnic tensions and strengthened cross-ethnic relationships. In other communities, residents reported that repairing irrigation canals reduced tension between villagers and provided temporary work for young people, while helping the authorities to distribute water more equitably.

According to the Uzgen District Water Authority Department, the rehabilitation of the Kara-Kulja/Uzgen canal increased the volume and reliability of water for its 14,000 multi-ethnic residents. When the works were completed, farmers began

paying for water that they used. The district was recently rated the most successful in Osh province in collection of water fees. The budget of the Water Authority has increased significantly, raising an additional \$8,000 annually for future maintenance.

"Our project helped multi-ethnic communities in Uzgen and Kara-Kulja districts unite... they [came to] trust the project and told other farmers."
Kanibek Alyazov, head of the Kara-Kulja district government

SUPPORTING A COMMON CIVIC IDENTITY

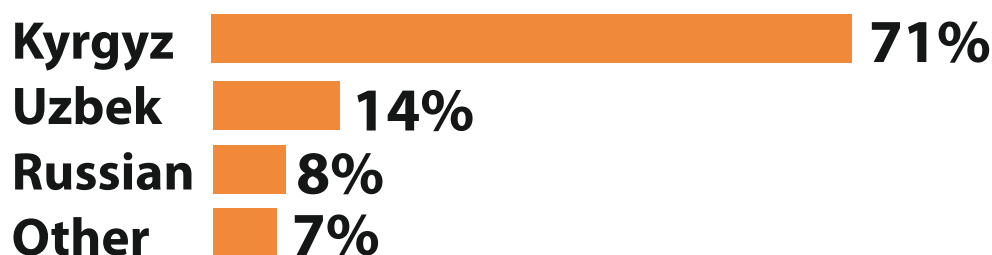
"Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic nation. However, the ethnic component in the state policy is inadequate. The task of forming civic identity has been neglected for many years."

Kyrgyzstan Sustainable Development Strategy and Ethnic Policy

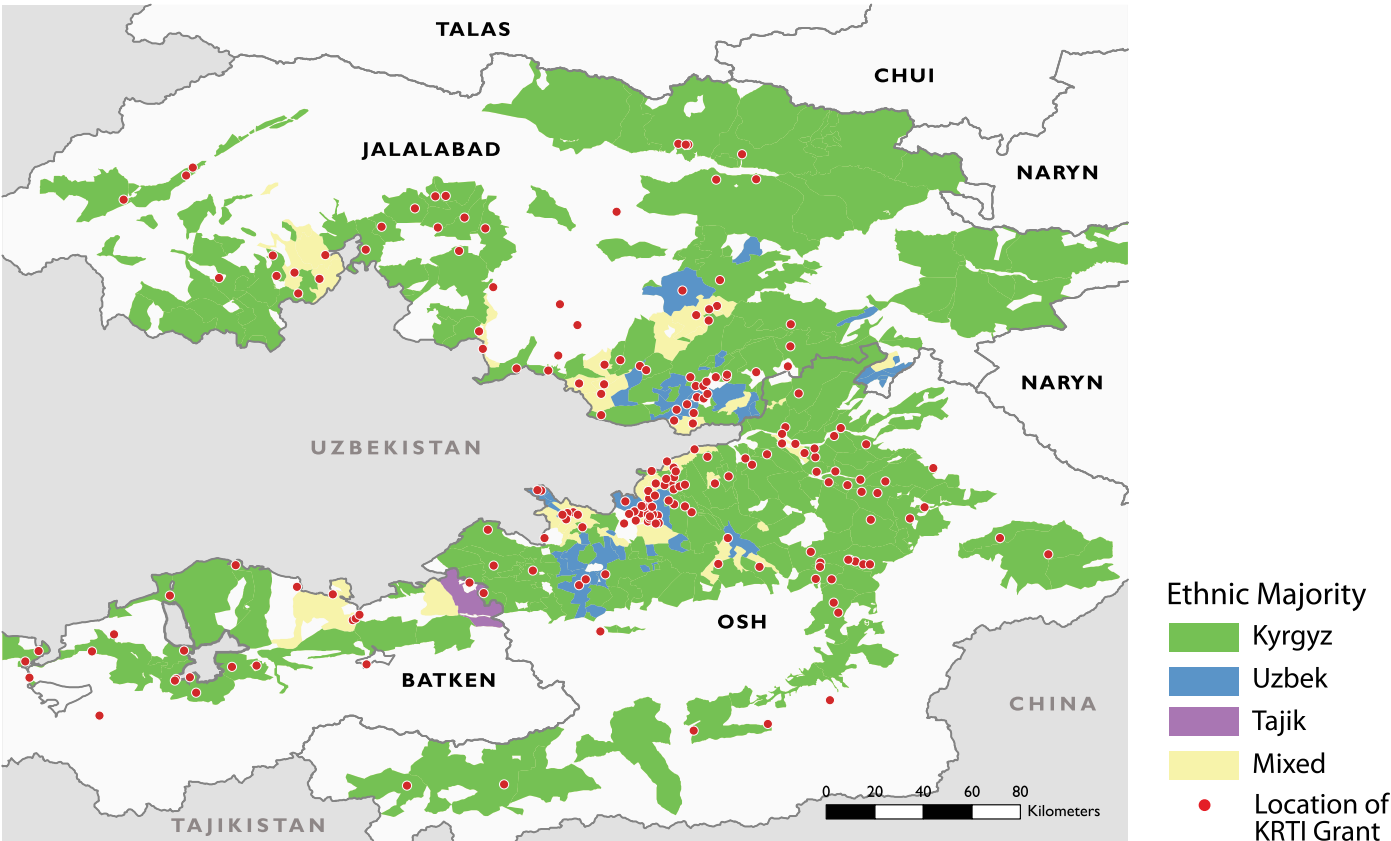
As Kyrgyzstan endeavors to build an accountable and effective democracy, it also strives to create a common civic identity that respects and nurtures tolerance. Creating this identity has proven challenging, as ethnic, regional, and social divides persist. These divides were key factors in both the political turmoil that led to political change and ethnic violence in 2010. As ethnic violence swept across southern Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010, killing or wounding hundreds and displacing as many as 400,000, distrust increased between the country's myriad ethnic groups. In particular, the large Uzbek population in southern Kyrgyzstan withdrew from public life, as traces of Uzbek language and culture, including media outlets and shops, were shuttered.

Kyrgyzstan's constitutional guarantee of the rights of minorities has not prevented an increase in ethnic tensions in recent years and difficulties persist in achieving a common civic identity. While the government has made attempts at formalizing specific policies on language and ethnic rights, communities have struggled to coexist under mounting tensions. KRTI has responded by addressing key conflict triggers, supporting the equitable distribution of services as well as reforms and initiatives that are working to ensure that all citizens of Kyrgyzstan have the opportunity to participate in public life.

In the immediate aftermath of 2010 violence, KRTI was careful not to exacerbate tensions by focusing support solely on the ethnic Uzbek communities that bore the brunt of damage in 2010. The program took an equitable approach and supported local partners responding to grievances in multi-ethnic communities, ethnic Uzbek mahallas, as well as primarily Kyrgyz economically strapped rural mountainous communities across the south. In particular, KRTI aimed to relieve tensions between communities where competition over limited resources, such as electricity or irrigation water, had the potential to take on an ethnic character.



LOCATIONS OF KRTI SMALL GRANTS AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN KYRGYZSTAN



Promoting Respect for Diversity and Tolerance

In early 2011, KRTI partnered with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Aga Khan Foundation to bring Kyrgyzstan's leading authors and illustrators together to produce children's books as part of the Foundation's early childhood development program. Fifteen authors and illustrators, representing Tajik, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian ethnicities, discussed how story characters and language could best be used to teach tolerance and respect for diversity. Participants submitted their stories, and the top three were then translated into dual-language

combinations of Kyrgyz with either Tajik, Uzbek, English or Russian text. The books promoted the rights of minorities to maintain their own language and culture but also underscored the importance of learning Kyrgyz. After winning the Ministry of Education's stamp of approval, 6,000 were published and distributed to more than 450 school libraries or kindergartens in Naryn, Osh, and Jalalabad provinces. KRTI supported the printing of 10,500 copies, and the organization of workshops for preschool teachers, and community meetings for parents, teachers, and children.

101,000



Children's Books and Teacher Kits

Based on the warm reception to the project, KRTI and its partners brought the initiative to scale by reprinting 90,500 copies of the dual-language books for distribution among 2,191 schools nationwide. A teachers' toolkit was produced to educate children and their parents on principles of tolerance, pluralism, and conflict resolution. It also included animated television episodes based on these books.

Similarly, KRTI helped a local theater company in Jalalabad produce a play called "Neighbors" that used humor to show how local tensions can lead to conflict in a community. The play premiered in Jalalabad's 500-seat Barpy Theater, also refurbished with support from KRTI. After a positive reception, the company went on tour, performing in 36 different villages throughout Jalalabad province. Together, the ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz actors shared the National Theater Award – a highly symbolic statement for the country, which was still struggling to reconcile following the violence.

"The play portrays the centuries-old friendship of two nations. After watching this KRTI-funded comedy, people realize how similar their cultures, traditions, and customs are. Such performances are essential for strengthening inter-ethnic relationships."
Former Minister of Culture and Information
Nurlan Shakiyev

Supporting Civil Society Input into Ethnic Policy Design

As a party to the United Nations International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Kyrgyzstan is required to report on related norms and practices. However, it had not done so since 2007. In February 2012, when a government delegation traveled to Geneva to report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on the current situation of minorities, KRTI provided funding for three civil society representatives to monitor and participate in the proceedings and report back to the public. The CERD, in its official response, cited civil society's participation as "well-structured and relevant" and encouraged the government to further engage with civil society on this important issue.

2,191



Schools and Libraries



"Neighbors", a play promoting ethnic tolerance toured in communities in the South

The government subsequently amended its “Concept for Ethnic Development and Consolidation of Kyrgyzstan's Society” to reflect some of the recommendations raised by the CERD.

Strengthening Minority Language Media to Support a Common Civic Identity

In the aftermath of the June 2010 ethnic violence, local television stations in southern Kyrgyzstan halted the broadcasting of all their Uzbek-language programming. As a result, Uzbeks and other minorities receive little news about local events from within

the country, and often rely on foreign news outlets as a primary source of news.

The political and social upheaval and changes of the last three years has heightened the need for accurate, relevant, locally produced information in order to increase citizen awareness of recovery services by the government and donor organizations, dispel rumors associated with the myriad changes in the political sphere, and help all citizens engage substantively in democratic processes. In late 2010, KRTI helped to scale up the



Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-supported weekly newsletter called “Peace to Your Home” (Mir Vashemu Domu), published by the Public Association of Journalists. The newsletter, published in Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek, soon increased its circulation from 1,200 to 14,000 copies per week. This publication was the first and only multilingual newsletter in the south highlighting services during the recovery period. In 2011, a group of local journalists established Yntymak Radio, a state-owned radio station, supported by the international NGO Internews and the U.S. Department of State. KRTI later provided a generator and other key equipment to Yntymak radio to help maintain its broadcast programming during regular electricity black-outs – a time when communication is most vital.

In early 2013, the management of Jalalabad's “7th Channel” approached KRTI requesting support to help establish a team of journalists and technical personnel to produce quality Uzbek-language programming on a weekly basis. The new multi-ethnic team was integrated into the station's Kyrgyz language evening news

production team, to better reflect the diverse nature of Jalalabad. Additionally, KRTI provided 7th Channel with expert coaching to help develop an editorial policy and train the new team. After the establishment of an Uzbek-language weekly news program on social and cultural issues, KRTI provided the equipment necessary to continue this pilot initiative, as a complement to their regular Kyrgyz-language nightly news. While multi-language programming remains a controversial issue, 7th Channel has shown that there is a market for it and, with KRTI's support, has decided to implement a regular Uzbek language news program.



RESPONDING IN A DYNAMIC CONTEXT

When USAID launched the KRTI program in May 2010, few could predict the changes that would occur in the ensuing months and years. Very few predicted the scale of the ethnic violence in the south and instability around the mining sector that threatened to derail progress. No one could, with certainty, predict what would happen in each of the elections, nor the subsequent political wrangling, the building and collapsing of coalitions that were to come. Similarly, in 2010 it was impossible to identify the opportunities for effective engagement and champions of institutional reform that were to emerge. Through KRTI, USAID maintained the flexibility to program most effectively in the dynamic context of transition. With ongoing awareness of the situation, KRTI leveraged promising opportunities like the creation of Public Advisory Boards at all levels of government, the State Registration's Service launch of streamlined "One Stop" Citizen Service Centers across the country, and the Ministry of Finance's innovative e-platform to enhance budget transparency and public procurement. Similarly, the flexible support enabled KRTI to support civil

society activists calling for greater accountability in the selection of judges, and more inclusive decision-making in urban planning. KRTI's commitment to flexibility and rapid response allowed it to best leverage new opportunities to support positive "agents of change" and help local partners identify and rapidly respond to instability as it emerged within their communities.

Following the ethnic violence in Osh and Jalalabad in June 2010, KRTI was able to expand its programmatic approach to include a specific focus on the south of the country and instability between communities there. This pivot included the establishment of a permanent presence in the city of Osh in order to partner directly with communities facing instability and conflict. The north-south division among political elites continues to encumber political discourse; and the shift of KRTI has helped to inform the program and reflect the competing realities in the country.



Supporting Public Advisory Boards to Improve Citizen Engagement

In March 2011, interim President Roza Otunbaeva issued a decree that all ministries, state agencies, and local governments were to create consultative bodies, known as Public Advisory Boards (PABs). These new permanent bodies – composed of volunteer representatives from civil society, public unions, and the business sector – would facilitate interaction, encourage more inclusivity and transparency when developing policies and making decisions, and ensure the public's priorities and interests were best served. The

formation of these bodies emerged as a unique opportunity for KRTI to support the ongoing democratic transition.

Within weeks of the decree, representatives of the national government requested the Agency for Social Technologies (AST) to provide training in budgeting and legislation analysis to members of the newly established Boards. With support from KRTI, AST provided training for 25 newly established Boards associated with national ministries and state agencies, equipping board members with the skills necessary for effective

monitoring of ministerial budgets and legislation analysis.

Kyrgyzstan has been struggling to put its economy on track and create an attractive environment for foreign investment. The development of transparent and inclusive oversight of the mining industry is critical to these efforts. Citizens, especially those living near Kyrgyzstan's gold mining communities, have real concerns about the corruption surrounding the allocation of mining licenses and the potential environmental degradation that could result from mining. In this context, KRTI identified the PAB

associated with the State Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources as a key mechanism to help include a wider variety of stakeholders in the regulation of extractive industries. With support from KRTI, the PAB for the State Agency launched a campaign to inform discussions about mining exploration by providing accurate and authoritative information on transparent mining policies to affected communities and decision-makers.

In June 2011, most community members in the south were not aware that the government had decreed the establishment of PABs and had no clear understanding of the role these bodies were to play. Concerned that advisory boards, as appointed by local leaders, were not reflective of the varied interests or ethnic diversity of the communities they represented, local NGO Abad approached KRTI to support an outreach campaign calling on citizens to monitor and participate more actively in the process. Through the life of this activity, Abad kept contacting the State Agency for Local Self Government, asking it to reconsider the boards' formation. The Agency responded by reviewing the

membership of PABs in Osh, Batken and Jalalabad. Following this initial project, KRTI partnered with Abad on a number of subsequent activities to encourage greater citizen engagement with local government in key communities.

Promoting Accountable Judicial Selection

In July 2011, civil society took notice of irregularities and flaws in the selection of judges at the national and local levels. The Citizen's Council to Control the Court System (CCCCS), an ad hoc coalition of leading NGOs, came together to call for greater transparency in the process carried out by the Judges Selection Committee. Soon after representative contacted KRTI with an idea for a project to address this problem, and in less than a week, KRTI arranged financial support for the CCCCCS to launch an outreach campaign and create a citizens' hotline to increase awareness of and input into the selection process. As a result of the information received from citizens, as well as its own verification, the CCCCCS was able to provide informed comments to the selection committee. The CCCCCS asserts that this information was a critical factor in the Interim President's decision to reject the

majority of candidates for the Supreme Court, and ultimately, in the resignation of the Judicial Committee's chairperson.

With the judicial selection process back on track, KRTI continued to support the CCCCCS's monitoring of the process. The council members established a website (www.koom.kg) where citizens could voice their concerns and questions related to judicial reform and learn about or discuss decisions on court cases, which has on average 4,000 users each week. The ad hoc coalition of NGOs continues to be actively engaged in judicial reform through this website.

"Civil society was legitimately concerned about the Supreme Court judicial selection process in 2011. Civil Society's advocacy slowed the process; however, the process was flawed. The monitoring that Rita Kurasatova and her NGO colleagues did clearly helped to ensure that the process was more accountable and transparent, and will only help to form a better foundation on which to reform the entire judicial sector."

Fred Huston, Country Director, USAID-IDLO Judicial Strengthening Program in Kyrgyzstan



Citizens Informed
about Judicial Selection
Process each week

500+ 

Advocating for Inclusive Urban Development in Osh

Everywhere in the world, municipal governments must make improvements to their cities, which often requires citizens to relocate because of the public works. The process of asserting eminent domain is rarely easy for home and business owners faced with relocation. In May 2012, residents and business owners of Monueva Street in Osh learned that their street was slated for widening and their homes and buildings would be demolished. Rumors persisted among residents on as many as seven other streets, that they, too, would face a similar fate in the coming year. While the citizens understood the necessity of relocating, they did

not feel included in the decision-making process. They felt the compensation offered was a fraction of fair market value, and the residents of Monueva street wrote a series of letters to the municipal government and the Prime Minister's office stating their case.

A local NGO, Interbilim, saw the potential for unrest around this issue, and asked for assistance from KRTI to help them provide legal support to Osh residents potentially facing the demolition of their homes and businesses. Through a series of grants, KRTI helped Interbilim hire lawyers and an appraisal firm to help residents obtain what they felt was fair compensation, helped them secure the proper ownership documentation, and

helped advocate for a relocation process that was in accordance with the law. KRTI also funded Interbilim's outreach efforts to raise awareness among citizens regarding expropriation plans and provide the information they needed to access the financial compensation process.

As a result of these efforts, all Monueva Street residents received legal advice. With the support of Interbilim's legal advisors, a number of residents were able to renegotiate with the city for a higher compensation rate. Interbilim's sustained constructive engagement helped the city adopt a more inclusive and transparent process. Moreover, Interbilim continued to work with the Osh Mayor's Office to design a more equitable and transparent process for future housing expropriations. Interbilim lawyers worked with the city officials to draft policies that called for public participation in the city planning process, and enshrined a process of dialogue between authorities and residents in expropriation cases.

"Widening of Monueva Street was a good lesson, particularly for those whose houses are subject to demolition as part of the Master Plan implementation. KRTI's joint work with a human rights organization like Interbilim and the Legal Center opened the eyes of many residents. It prompted them to pay due attention to the timely registration of their property since it directly influences compensation. People began to understand that everyone has a right to accommodation, and that their property is protected by law."
Osh Resident

Supporting Efforts to Streamline Access to Critical Services

Government-issued identification cards, called "passports," are required to access basic government education and health services, collect pensions, and vote in local elections. Extensive documentation is necessary to obtain a passport, a requirement that is hardest on Kyrgyzstan's many internal economic migrants as well as the tens of thousands who lost their papers when their homes and businesses burned during the June 2010 violence.



In spring 2012, then-Prime Minister Babanov opened one of the country's first "One Stop" centers for government services in Osh City. The Osh Citizen Service Center was designed to streamline the lengthy process for obtaining critical documents and eliminate opportunities for petty corruption. The new center included an automated computer payment system, camera-monitored public reception areas, and a public list of the documents and fees required for each public service. For the national government, this was an opportunity to demonstrate how it was improving citizens' access to

public services while tackling corruption. Through several small grants, KRTI partners launched an information campaign that told residents how they could access these new services.

Throughout the life of the program, KRTI partnered with the State Registration Services, the state-run enterprise Infocom, and a variety of individual passport offices to help advance these critical reforms and improve service access. In Nariman, Aravan, and Mady districts in the south, KRTI helped to rebuild and furnish these offices, adding service

counter partitions and information boards, and providing easy access to templates as well as samples to help citizens to complete documents – eliminating the need to bribe clerks for assistance. Residents reported that the delivery time for new ID cards and passports was reduced by as much as 30-50%. Many residents reported that they obtained “passports” for the first time, allowing them to vote during the elections.

KRTI also provided a server for the central document processing center in Bishkek, and 22 electronic signature devices to simplify application and processing procedures. The projects have dramatically reduced the time, cost, and effort that many citizens must invest to get these critical documents.

“I believe that people will [now] change their perception of government services.”

*Abdybait Kydyrov, Osh
Province Registration
Department*

Piloting Innovative Approaches to Transparent Public Finance

The government has recently instituted an important series of reforms demonstrating a commitment to open and transparent budgeting of government funds. The Ministry of Finance and the state-run enterprise InfoSystem launched the web portal www.okmot.kg, an online tool to track government budgeting and procurement. This website displays the day-to-day expenditures of both ministries and local governments. Government officials are proud that Kyrgyzstan is only the third country in the world to develop such a system. However, while they found it to be innovative, many recently elected government officials were uncomfortable with the new technology and found it difficult to use. To overcome this challenge and ensure that the platform was used effectively, KRTI partnered with the Alliance for Budget Transparency, InfoSystem, and the Public Advisory Board of the Ministry of Finance to create and pilot a video training toolkit to help government officials, businesses, and the general public learn how to use this web portal. The project included a public

outreach campaign to raise awareness about the site. Early successes of this pilot approach to transparent budgeting has encouraged other finance sector reforms. KRTI also continued to incorporate support for this web portal into other initiatives aiming to strengthen the budgeting and procurement capacity of locally elected officials. Local governments who have been trained in the tool have used it during open public meetings, reallocated funds, and have uncovered previously unknown budget line items.





BUILDING A CRITICAL MASS FOR ACCOUNTABLE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement officials – from criminal investigators and national security officers to border guards and traffic police – notoriously suffer from a lack of citizen trust. Poorly paid and typically lacking adequate tools to do their jobs, these officials are largely mono-ethnic, operating in a multi-ethnic society, under contradictory laws and weak policy oversight. The notion “to protect and to serve” does not prevail. Thus, public confidence in law enforcement bodies critical to the maintenance of public security is practically non-existent. Given their inability to prevent the ethnic unrest in the south in June 2010, the lack of trust in the police within minority communities has severely deteriorated since then. In the aftermath of the violence, the police were seen as powerless to protect lives and property. Human rights organizations have reported widespread arbitrary arrest and extortion of detainees. In numerous court cases, witnesses and defense attorneys have allegedly been beaten and judges have been intimidated.

Kyrgyzstan's security sector challenges will ultimately be solved through political will and long-term institutional strengthening. Nevertheless, through a selection of finite small grants, KRTI has helped partners provide tangible improvements to citizens' personal safety and security and laid the groundwork for future reform. KRTI has helped local government in key communities install street lights and traffic lights to help reduce crime at night and reduce the number of traffic accidents. The program supported a number of select Local Crime Prevention Centers to improve substantive interaction between police and community leaders. KRTI partners launched a nationwide campaign to empower citizens to resist corruption by traffic police. With support from KRTI, a coalition of 24 NGOs partnered to conduct a nationwide petition campaign that successfully convinced the Ministry of Internal Affairs to adopt a series of substantive reforms. While KRTI's short-term activities have had modest impact on their own, together, related activities and their resulting effects have translated into significant

progress toward the longer term challenges – such as effective and accountable law enforcement – with which Kyrgyzstan continues to grapple.

15%
 **Decrease in Crime After Street Light Installations**

58%
 **Decrease in Accidents After Traffic Light Installations**



Helping to Improve Safety and Security through Infrastructure Upgrades

After the violence in Osh and Jalalabad, most people stayed within their own neighborhoods and few ventured out past sunset. The lack of functioning street lights in the city added to the sense of insecurity and increased the opportunities for criminal elements. Over a three-year period, KRTI partnered with local authorities to repair street lights in several southern towns to bolster a feeling of safety and security among citizens. One project, initiated in late 2011, restored street light service for 79,000 residents in Jalalabad. The local office of the Ministry of Interior reported to local media two months after the installation

that it recorded a 10-15% reduction in crime in the city since the lights were installed. The prosecutor's office also said that the initiative contributed to an increased sense of security among residents and would lead to rebuilding ties among the cities' various ethnicities. The Mayor's Office reported in January 2012 that shops and cafés had begun to remain open at night, and the city had benefitted from a 12% increase in sales tax revenue.

Similarly, dilapidated traffic lights resulted in high numbers of traffic accidents that often spiraled into violent conflict. To improve the situation KRTI initiated projects with local authorities and local municipal

works departments in Jalalabad, Osh, Uzgen, Kara-Suu, and Nookat cities to repair or replace traffic lights and pedestrian crosswalks. According to the Osh Traffic Police Service, by the end of June 2013, the number of traffic accidents in Osh decreased by an average of 58% at the 20 intersections with new traffic lights. And unexpectedly, taxi drivers reported a sharp reduction in attempts by traffic police to solicit bribes; both Uzbek and Kyrgyz drivers reported that traffic police were now following protocol more often when issuing tickets. The Osh City Road Department has since initiated a road-marking project in an effort to continue improving safety in the city.

In Nookat district, KRTI supported the local government to design, print, and distribute 250 safety posters and 5,000 brochures to be used by authorities and teachers to teach traffic safety at four elementary schools and four kindergartens. In addition to their safety-related message, the take-home brochures and posters provided evidence for parents that local governments were indeed taking action to address traffic conditions in Nookat. The traffic safety outreach project was later adopted by local governments in Uzgen and Jalalabad.

"With the new traffic lights, driving has become safer...and we feel more confident on city roads. There are fewer disputes with the traffic police as relations are more transparent. Our rights are significantly protected from illegal negotiations with them."
Gopurjan Nishanov, Osh City resident

Civil Society Rallies Support for Ministry of Internal Affairs Reform

In 2012, a group of 24 reform-minded NGOs came together to form a consortium, calling themselves the "Civic Alliance for Reform and Results." This group

set out to gain public support to persuade Parliament to consider the consortium's recommended reforms for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The group reached out to KRTI for support in launching a campaign to collect more than the 10,000 signatures necessary for Parliamentary review. This represented the first nationwide attempt to test the newly established process whereby civil society could initiate legislation for parliamentary consideration. In spite of the onerous process, key civil society leaders succeeded in creating sufficient broad-based support for their grassroots initiative. On





a number of occasions, representatives of the Ministry consulted the consortium, and they were ultimately invited to discuss their proposal with the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in a public televised forum. The Ministry of Internal Affairs agreed to incorporate several of civil society's recommendations in its own reform proposal, including working toward more diversity and merit-based personnel practices, creating better anti-corruption policies, and working closely with civil society for ongoing performance monitoring. Thanks to KRTI's support, the consortium was able to attract more donor funding and continues to encourage civil society

organizations to participate in ongoing dialogue on security policies and police reform.

According to Osh city volunteers, local police did not impede their efforts to collect signatures during the campaign and the Ministry of Internal Affairs started developing its own reform concept because they understood that if they will not do it, then civil society will do it for them.

"Suggestions of the Civil Alliance for Reforms and Results will definitely be considered in the reform of the Internal Affairs Organs in Kyrgyzstan...Civil Society should be at this table I encourage you to continue" Prime Minister Jantoro Satybaldiev at televised public meeting February 13 with Alliance representatives



Signatures Collected to Send
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Reforms to Parliament

Promoting Public Safety through Local Crime Prevention Centers

The national government created Local Crime Prevention Centers (LCPCs) in 2008, as a way to prevent crime within neighborhoods. Members of LCPCs – ordinary residents, block committees, business association representatives – meet regularly to discuss community security issues and liaise directly with law enforcement agencies to identify, prioritize, and resolve ongoing public safety concerns.

KRTI supported the rehabilitation of six of the most active Local Crime Prevention Centers in select communities of the country and hired advisors from the local NGO Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) to help members design and implement a comprehensive training program. Organized by FTI, the LCPCs from the north and south participated in a conference to exchange experiences and best practices. In addition, KRTI assisted in outfitting two resource centers – in Uzgen and Nookat Districts – to support nearly 40 additional LCPCs, helping them to better address public safety and security issues in their communities.

The Turan LCPC in Osh city is now more effectively responding to citizens' needs, and raising awareness about public safety and security issues. Public attendance at weekly community meetings with residents and local government officials has more than doubled. When community leaders noted that the absence of streetlights heightened security issues in the evening, the Turan LCPC asked the Osh Municipal Government for help. In Turan, the Center uncovered proof of corruption within the local police that led to the police chief's dismissal. Several centers have worked with local government officials to plan for traffic and street lighting, increasing safety and security and reducing traffic accidents.

Empowering Citizens to Resist Corruption

In Kyrgyzstan, the general public encounters corruption on a daily basis. Interactions with traffic police, ever-present on people's daily commutes, is particularly representative of the problem. The police are widely acknowledged to suggest, or be open to the driver's suggestion, to settle fines “on site” in lieu of issuing actual violations. Given this impunity, many drivers abandon any respect for the

rules of the road altogether. Many citizens are unaware of their actual rights or how to address their complaints.

In 2011-2012, KRTI supported the NGO Result in their campaign “You Have Rights, Know Your Rights” to combat road traffic corruption. Result published more than 100,000 brochures that detailed drivers' rights and traffic police obligations. They also included the Ministry of Internal Affairs' hotline number, where drivers could report violations. The “Rights” brochure was distributed at gas stations, appeared on billboards in city centers, and broadcast via public service announcements (PSAs) on daily television and radio – which aired on primetime for three months.

Less than a month after the campaign's launch, the video PSAs were viewed more than 14,000 times on local video websites, generating a flurry of discussion in related blogs and on social media. Although the brochure was distributed free at gas stations around the country, within days it was spotted being sold in the largest bazaar in Bishkek – an indication of its value to drivers in the capital. In May 2013, team members



observed that the brochure had been reproduced verbatim by an unknown civil society organization with an updated schedule of traffic fees and was being distributed in grocery stores in Osh. During the spring of 2013, the national broadcaster aired a story on the national news about a crackdown on corruption amongst the rank and file traffic police, an unprecedented event in Kyrgyzstan.

One writer on www.diesel.elcat.kg reported that when a traffic policeman stopped her – despite the fact that she was driving well within the 40 km/hr limit – she pulled out the Result brochure and asked him for an explanation. He read it, and then let her leave. Another comment on www.blive.kg, praised civil society for planting this seed of change.

14,000+



Public Service
Announcements Views

210,000+



Brochures
Distributed

120



Billboards

21,000+



Website Hits

IDENTIFYING CRITICAL ISSUES: TRANSPARENCY IN ENERGY SECTOR

Notoriously corrupt, the energy sector had become a target for citizen frustration, disaffection with government service delivery, and a breeding ground for citizen protest. The widespread protests over rising energy costs, power cuts, and general energy sector mismanagement played a leading role in the protests that led to the government's collapse in April 2010.

Chronic budget deficits seriously hamper the government's ability to invest in deteriorating energy infrastructure, while rampant corruption negatively impacts revenues. Inconsistent service fuels citizen resentment; internal migration and illegal connections increase competition over limited electricity and feed conflict in communities with limited resources. The government provided little information to consumers about their own plans. Public confidence in the sector and its institutions remained low, with a potential for widespread dissatisfaction and unrest.

KRTI's programs are individually designed to address a country's most pressing transition needs, focusing attention on the "make-or-break" issues that will decide the country's future. Early on, KRTI program staff identified the energy sector as one where restoring public confidence in the government's reform efforts, particularly transparency in its operations and services, was critical to maintaining stability.

Because KRTI seeks out existing capacities and focuses on local priorities, program staff quickly learned that Unison was a key local NGO working on small energy-related projects and promoting energy reform advocacy. In October 2011, media coverage of Unison's work caught the KRTI team's attention, particularly as the director is also co-chair of the Public Advisory Board called the Fuel and Energy Sector Transparency Initiative (FESTI). FESTI is the Board of the Ministry of Energy's first step at energy reform, comprised of civil society activists, government officials, and energy industry representatives. By 2011, the

Initiative had helped the government save considerable amounts of money and had become an effective vehicle for popular participation in the reform process. KRTI immediately saw Unison as a potentially dynamic partner. Initial support went to helping Unison replicate its best practices from earlier initiatives, and allowed the group to design and implement a variety of additional energy-related activities.

"One of UNISON's chief aims was to convince customers not to siphon off energy through illegal lines or collude with corrupt meter readers. Most of all, we are trying to change the relationship between the companies and the consumers," said Nurzat Abdyrasulova, President of UNISON.



Leveraging Energy Partnerships for Greater Impact

Unison had already received a grant from other donors to pilot a small-scale poster campaign in select communities in Chui and Issyk-kul provinces. The posters included information to increase consumer awareness about their rights vis-à-vis the electricity companies, provide guidance on reading a bill and meters, to ensure legal electricity charges and accurate information on electricity outages and quality. KRTI offered to help Unison bring the campaign to scale by providing a small grant to translate the Russian posters into Kyrgyz and Uzbek, printing enough copies to be able to

distribute them across the country, and covering production costs for complementary video public service announcements to be broadcast on television nationwide. As a result, more citizens took action, voicing complaints through another Unison partner, the regional Consumer Rights Protection Centers (CRPC). A key success of the program was the return of some 250,000 KGS to those who had been improperly charged for electrical services in 2011.

Expanding Consumer Awareness of Energy Rights and Responsibilities

Building on growing citizen awareness of their rights, thanks

largely to the outreach campaign, the KRTI-Unison partnership, together with the Public Foundation Promoting Economic Development and Education (PEDE), organized eight community meetings. Disgruntled Bishkek consumers, frustrated with power outages, were threatening strikes and protests. The public meetings brought together low-income, rural economic migrants, currently living in informal settlements (novostroiki) around Bishkek with representatives from the Ministry of Energy, energy distribution companies, and parliamentarians allowing them to discuss energy-related issues directly and take steps toward their resolution.

Two other UNISON partners, Public Fund Libra and Luch Solomona, organized similar community meetings in 10 southern townships near Osh and Jalalabad where tensions over access to electricity had been reported. When consumers whose homes were destroyed in the 2010 violence in Osh continued to receive electricity bills, Luch Solomona used the same outreach materials and the community meeting model to inform them of their legal rights. Upon receiving the materials, many consumers learned that the electricity companies were required to provide residential and business electricity meters free of charge. Previously, the electric companies had told certain communities to buy their own meters in the markets, while neighboring communities were receiving the meters for free.

"[We] learned a lot about our employees and activity on the sites. This was also a good opportunity to get feedback from consumers and improve the quality of service."
Osh Electro's lawyer and chief engineer Raimberdiev Nurlan.

Following the successful nationwide campaign, KRTI expanded this support during winter of 2012, helping to redesign the posters for more effective communication and adding information about consumer responsibilities, including practical steps for conserving heat and electricity. Some 90,000 information materials were printed in Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek, and several radio and television programs and televised public service announcements were added to maximize outreach.

Reducing Tension over Energy Access in Volatile Communities

Competition over already limited electricity in Suzak district of Jalalabad province reached a tipping point when increased demand overwhelmed the aging system. Thousands of dislocated Jalalabad residents relocated there after the 2010 violence. KRTI supported the Suzak district government, in partnership with the Jalalabad province power authority, to procure and install transformers and additional power lines to improve electrical access to five key villages most impacted by the large number of immigrants and internal migrants.

Since completion, the area's local hospital authorities reported a reduced numbers of patients, attributing the decrease to the fact that citizens have more reliable light and heat in their homes. Local school teachers also reported that students' test scores and attendance rates were higher, thanks to having electricity at home, which allowed them to study at night.

In 2013, to further assist key partner Unison with its increased activism in the South and its focus on the rural/urban divide in that region, KRTI provided Unison with office equipment and furniture, and renovated its newly-established regional offices in Naryn and Osh. Today these offices are

important centers for supporting consumer rights and facilitating access to energy distribution companies on matters from illegal fees and bribes to individual rights and advocacy initiatives, as well as providing a secure space for public meetings and training.

Enabling Energy Stakeholders with More Accurate Information

In KRTI's final project with Unison, it supported a nationwide energy survey of government officials, electricity company staff, and consumers. The stakeholder information gleaned from the survey will empower these groups by providing a better understanding of issues relating to electricity service delivery and

enabling more informed engagement with utilities, government, and other related agencies, with the goal of improved service to electricity consumers.



ENABLING INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Although media restrictions have relaxed since 2010, media independence and objectivity remains a challenge to the transition. Media outlets lack skills in investigative journalism, remain subject to the editorial pressure of political and financial benefactors, and practice self-censorship. The resultant lack of credible and objective information hinders informed citizen decision-making and contributes to an environment where rumors spread quickly, potentially fueling violence.

KRTI immediately adopted a multi-pronged approach, with initiatives spread across print, television, radio, and internet outlets. The approach initiated a series of projects that help increase proficiency independence and objectivity of media and provide opportunities for industry-wide advocacy and collaboration. Additionally, KRTI helped the leading state and private broadcasters produce better and more consistent content. KRTI also supported a number of fledgling, but well respected, media producers and outlets to grow their reach by expanding television or radio presence.

Consumption Research Professionalizes Media Industry

Prior to 2010, media managers relied on limited, qualitative audience feedback on program content to guide programming decisions. That lack of factual information reduced their ability to effectively target programming in order to sell air time to advertisers. Over the life of the program, KRTI supported four waves of media research, along with the creation of the Joint Media Industry Committee (JMIC), an association of leading public and private broadcasters and advertising agencies, to oversee and objectively represent the interests of the media industry. This support enabled JMIC to provide the media industry with the tools necessary to acquire factual information about audiences' preferences and behavior. Not only did KRTI invest in the initial research, it also built the capacity of local firms to implement and refine the data on its own. KRTI provided technical assistance to JMIC from an internationally recognized Nielsen data auditor to confirm the data's authenticity and methodology, support the validity of the





findings to opponents, and recommend steps to further improve the integrity and sustainability of the process.

With this data, media managers have been able to offer more interesting and relevant content, thereby growing their market share and attracting new sources of revenue.

Simultaneously, it allows media outlets to be more independent from political interests, and provide more objective information to their audiences. This groundbreaking initiative, while common in mature media markets, was a first in Kyrgyzstan.

"I'm so proud to show our clients this data. It shows a new level of professionalism in our media market."
- Advertising Agency Representative in Kyrgyzstan

JMIC leadership has gone on to invest in and collectively manage the third and fourth rounds of research, while championing its use within media and advertising sectors.

The research has been used by both stations and advertisers to better target their programming and resources. For example, OTRK, the State Television and

Radio Broadcaster of the Kyrgyzstan, used the data to confirm its dominance among domestic station, but found that it trailed behind foreign stations at key times. OTRK was able to use that information to retool specific programs and timeslot, to better target their key demographics. These small changes allowed the station to retake the top spot in the ratings, and better market their air time to advertisers. Similarly, Channel 7 – the most popular channel in Southern Kyrgyzstan – used the data to justify a renewal of Uzbek language broadcasting after learning that they were losing the large ethnic Uzbek population to foreign broadcasters. Many other such stories continue to highlight the need and value of reliable media consumption research, as well as the industry's commitment to maintaining it.

"This research is the most significant and useful initiative since the revolution for the media industry...."
- Bakytjan Amatov, General Director of NTS TV

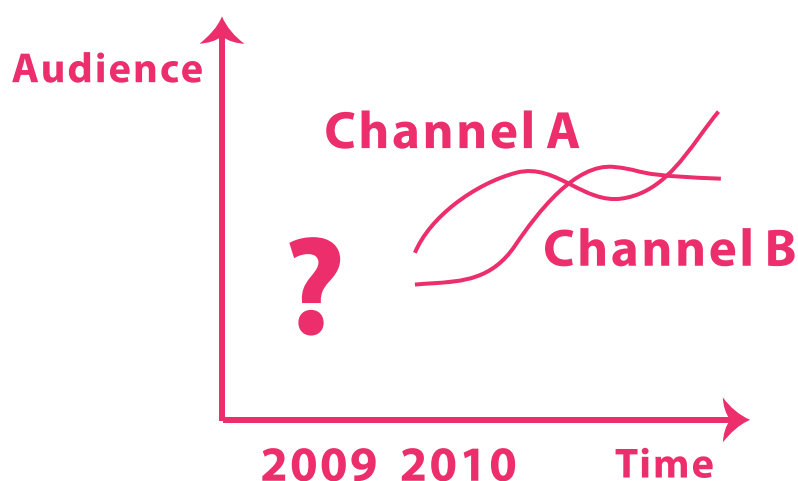
Supporting a Reliable Broadcaster's Expansion to Television

The media consumption data showed that citizens perceived Radio Azattyk to be, by far, the most reliable of all media outlets. To support this key resilience, KRTI provided in-kind support to Azattyk, which included better equipment and expert coaching to help produce higher quality programming relevant to its largely rural audience. With this support, Azattyk transitioned from a static “talking heads” discussion format to more engaging video reportage, capturing the voices and perspectives of rural citizens. KRTI also supported several episodes of Azattyk's “Inconvenient Questions,” a program that focused on controversial issues relative to microcredit, energy, and mining. For the first time, the station sent its news team to key rural and isolated mining communities in

Talas, Naryn, and Osh provinces – for example, to film and interview stakeholders whose concerns ranged from variable pricing and corruption issues to environmental impacts in their communities. This investigative work informed the mining debate and the program's popularity encouraged Azattyk to continue its focus on this sector, investigating corruption associated with the award of mining licenses, often using footage collected from KRTI-funded trips.

When Osh and Jalalabad residents complained about the lack of transparency in allocating housing to victims of the 2010 violence, KRTI support enabled “Inconvenient Questions” to produce a 30-minute panel discussion with the residents' NGO representative, the Osh City Council speaker, and a

representative of the State Directorate for Reconstruction and Development. Aired first on television, then radio, and posted on the Azattyk website, the episode attracted broad attention, both from the public and the government, and encouraged government offices to release eligibility criteria for victims seeking new housing, establish a state commission to oversee housing distribution, and provide a list of housing recipients and those still waiting for assistance.





CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE

Public protests have become a common outlet for citizens to address concerns. Around 1,286 protests took place across Kyrgyzstan in 2012 – an average of more than three protests a day. People from all age groups, walks of life, and regions are involved in this protest culture. Vulnerable groups, including women and young people, have carved out a special niche. “Obon” or “Women Special Forces” are particularly formidable because police fear escalating the situation by physically removing them. Thirty

percent of the population between the ages of 14 and 28 are chronically unemployed and are thus easily organized during public protest. While protests reflect real grievances, they are often usurped by political opportunists, who allegedly pay protesters for their participation. These high stakes often result in peaceful rallies escalating into violence. KRTI has been well placed to counter these issues, and provide opportunities for vulnerable groups to make a tangible improvement in their community, rather than

participating in potentially destabilizing protests, by working with local leaders to organize clean-up or mobilization activities at critical moments. KRTI has also supported government and civil society initiatives to provide these groups – youth in particular – positive outlets and opportunities to build their skills, and express their views on violence, in productive ways.



200^{SOM}

Protesting*

VS

300^{SOM}

Short-term Employment

Daily Wage

(*reported)

Mobilizing Community Cooperation at Critical Times

Critical junctures, such as the October 2010 elections and the first anniversary of the April revolution, marked potential flash-points for protests and even violence. KRTI and its partners saw opportunities to implement targeted activities to deter these potentially disruptive events and maintain calm and stability in the country. A number of activities were initiated to harness their energy in ways that benefitted them and their communities through labor-intensive improvement of shared infrastructure and spaces.

These projects included rehabilitating youth-focused facilities, training aimed at improving employment opportunities, and work and social activities that engaged idle hands, thereby deterring mobilization for criminal or political protests.

In Bishkek during the spring and summer of 2011, more than 1,000 unemployed youth donned “I am the Future” T-shirts and undertook a “Renewal” campaign, planting trees and cleaning up their communities. KRTI provided a small stipend that enabled these young people to demonstrate their commitment to the community

and show they could bring about positive change. The “Renewal” campaign included a series of activities designed to encourage constructive and productive activities for youth, provide much-needed economic stimulus for some of the most at-risk communities, revitalize public spaces, and strengthen ties among the country's multicultural communities.

Throughout the spring and summer months of 2011, KRTI expanded the campaign to the south. To mitigate and respond to any potential heightened tensions during the one-year anniversary marking the 2010 violence, KRTI partners expanded the “Renewal” Campaign and mobilized more than 2,000 at-risk laborers across the south to engage in temporary work cleaning up their communities, digging irrigation ditches, planting trees, cleaning canals, and painting and cleaning up public parks. This collection of projects kept idle communities occupied and off the streets and focused on productive and constructive community projects. As a part of the campaign, in Jalalabad province, young people from ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz schools forgot their differences, competing via ethnically mixed sports and debating teams.

84,214

19

Days of Short-term Employment

3,721



Community members Engaged in “Renewal Campaign”



Empowering Students to Resist Bullying

One of the most pressing issues for youth and parents alike is school bullying, which often results in a form of racketeering, with older students demanding money from younger ones. This issue expands beyond the schoolyard, with links to organized crime and higher levels of corruption. According to a report from the local NGO League for Children's Rights Defenders, "52.9% of boys and 40.4% of girls are engaged in school racketeering in Kyrgyzstan." KRTI addressed the

issue in partnership with this NGO, building on its earlier outreach campaign to help redesign, translate into the Uzbek language, and print 6,500 copies of the manual "Prevention of Racketeering in the Schools of Kyrgyzstan" in Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek. In addition, KRTI supported the production of a 30-minute video toolkit, based on the manual, to help teachers and administrators organize extra-curricular activities on methods for preventing school racketeering.

Using Comedy to Engage Disenchanted Youth

A mainstay of political satire across the former Soviet Union are performances called Klub Vesolykh i Nakhodchivyykh (Club of the Funny and Inventive) or KVN, in which teams compete to provide humorous, improvised answers to a series of questions and also perform prepared comedy skits. Particularly popular among Kyrgyzstan's youth, KRTI and its partners identified KVN as an innovative mechanism to channel energies of the youth away from potentially destructive protests. Working

with partner Sun People, KRTI supported a competition among 14 teams from across the country at Bishkek's Sports Palace. The comedy event poked fun at protesters and ridiculed police harassment, attracting more than 2,000 youth and reaching even more through a nationally televised broadcast.

KRTI also asked its partner, the NGO Master Radosti, to organize focus groups on the issue for 150 at-risk youth aged 15-18. Radosti held master classes on skit writing in partnership with Tamashow Production and conducted four satirical skit and

panel sessions within and between schools. Teachers and parents alike have commented on the value of these initiatives, particularly in changing the behavior of some students, and have seen increased grades and behavior from participants.

"I found it easier to talk about our problems through jokes and humor."

– Saidullo Muminov, a student from school #124 of Furkat village, during master-classes



FILLING CRITICAL GAPS: PROVIDING TOOLS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL

For most Kyrgyz citizens, the success of the last three years of transition and democratic reform hinges on the ability of the government to include the public in decision-making and deliver reliable services in a transparent manner.

Demonstrating that the government can respond fairly to their concerns and expectations is a priority, particularly as the national government takes steps to decentralize and place more authority in the hands of locally elected officials. Progress has been slow and the capacity of newly-elected local government officials to make transparent budget decisions has not kept pace with their increased authority. In spite of this, many community leaders, frustrated with the frequently cumbersome process and slow pace, still remain eager to engage in local government.

Since USAID had not yet initiated a large-scale local governance program to support decentralization efforts, KRTI used its flexible program mechanisms to support a

number of different institutions and new initiatives as they took shape during the transition period. These efforts helped new local governments gain the trust of their constituents, and deliver essential services. The KRTI program was well-placed, particularly in the south, to support these initiatives from the ground up with a wide range of support – engaging civil society, filling essential information gaps, providing training, supporting advocacy, and even improving infrastructure.

Ensuring the Legitimacy and Capability of Locally Elected Bodies

While the high profile national level elections in 2011 were generally considered free and fair, efforts to ensure the success of the 2012 local elections received less attention. The success of these elections was an important democratic milestone, heralding an important step forward in the national government's decentralization process. During the elections, voters selected new local municipal and city



councils, which were to be granted an unprecedented level of governance and budgeting authority. To ensure that these critical elections were seen as legitimate, KRTI filled donor gaps by providing training support to election observers to complement resources provided by other international donors and supporting the efforts of two NGOs – Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society and Taza Shailoo – to monitor these elections. While these monitors uncovered some irregularities, the elections were seen as largely free and fair and resulted in citizens electing a cadre of 8,000 local deputies. Citizen confidence in the fairness of the election of local representatives marks the first step toward greater government

inclusiveness and accountability at the local level while laying the groundwork for government effort to devolve additional levels of authority.

Ensuring that this cadre of newly elected representatives, who were enthusiastic yet inexperienced, were able to effectively exercise their mandate has presented another challenge for the decentralization process and was another priority for KRTI. Public Fund Abad, a local NGO with more than 10 years of experience, served as KRTI's long-term partner working on local governance issues. In May 2013, Abad hosted a discussion between approximately 75 local council deputies and half a dozen national parliamentarians

around accountability, budgeting, and land management issues. Both local deputies and national government officials alike applauded the trainings and manuals of best practices and laws and forms required by local councils, as no similar resources exist. Abad went on to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Finance and the Agency for Regional Development to develop information and training materials for 1,000 local council deputies in the south.

Once on the job, local deputies were empowered with a number of innovative tools to help them track and disseminate their plans and expenditures through the website www.okmot.kg.

However, many local officials lacked the computer skills necessary to take full advantage of this tool – a gap KRTI and NGO Alliance for Budget Transparency filled by developing a DVD toolkit to train local government officials to access information and utilize the web portal. This campaign has provided first-hand training to local governments across the country. This effort enabled local officials to make their budgets and plans transparent and open.

Broadening Citizen Participation in the Political Process

When asked what skills they need to achieve success, many

local representatives, both old and new, acknowledged that they have little experience holding open meetings and engaging ordinary citizen in their work. In addition to building the technical capacity of local representatives, Abad is also working to enable village and city councils to hold public meetings where citizens can express their views on key issues and decisions. KRTI supported initiatives in cities across the country to help increase citizen engagement and dialogue with the newly-elected city councils.

KRTI also provided training, equipment, and other support to enable these locally elected bodies to hold public meetings

and budget hearings, resulting in substantive citizen input in key decisions. In a number of southern communities, these hearings led to major revisions of local budgets. For example, in Aral Aiyl Okmotu, these meetings allowed community members to prioritize road repairs over the installation of new health care facilities. In Naryn, open city council meetings allowed residents to address concerns with the Mayor, leading to changes in key policies, budget expenditures, and personnel. Such citizen involvement in local governance and decision-making was unprecedented in these communities. It has opened the eyes of local officials and



residents to new ways of doing business and created new mechanisms for citizen-government interactions that continue to expand. In many of these communities, citizens report that they are less suspicious of government processes and more engaged with local leaders.

During this transition, not only did government agencies struggle to adapt to new ways of doing business, but citizens also struggled to understand the new roles and authorities of local government. With support from KRTI, Abad developed an innovative tool to measure citizen expectations and inform the public about the changing roles and responsibilities of local government. This survey of residents' opinions of services helped local governments, as well as the Ministry of Finance, refine and reform their business practices and respond to their constituents. The tool proved so successful that the initial pilot in the south was expanded nationwide, and used as a model for mechanisms spearheaded by a number of ministries. This tool continues to be used by civil society organizations across the country, and is being adapted by the Ministry of Finance for use in formal assessments of local budgeting.

Sustaining and Strengthening Change through State Agency

As the decentralization process takes hold, the State Agency for Local Self Government and Ethnic Relations has responded to the challenge, implementing processes to ensure that local government mechanisms function effectively. KRTI has supported the Agency in enhancing those efforts, providing assistance to launch a series of public meetings to solicit local government, community, and civil society input and support as it refines its strategic vision for local self-governance. KRTI also provided support to enable the Agency to train, mentor, and equip its newly appointed "Expert Advisory Councils." Finally, as the Agency works to clarify the roles and responsibilities of local government entities, KRTI has helped extend its reach by reprinting "best practice" civil society manuals and training materials, successful piloted under earlier initiatives. As a result, the State Agency for Local Self Governance and Inter Ethnic Affairs is better equipped to ensure that the reforms intended to increase local governments' accountability, inclusiveness, and responsiveness are successful.

KRTI LEGACY

Over the life of the program, KRTI has supported more than 440 activities implemented by nearly 300 partners helping to contribute the success of Kyrgyzstan's transition.

Since 2010, Kyrgyzstan has made great strides toward becoming an inclusive, accountable, prosperous, and stable democracy. Challenges remain, but reaching important democratic milestones, such as free and fair elections and the peaceful transition of power, indicate significant progress. The President's five-year sustainable development strategy for 2013-2017 charts a path toward future democratic and economic development.

Efforts by institutions like the State Registration Service, the Ministry of Finance, and the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund can continue to draw from the work and experience of KRTI partners, and demonstrate that the government is committed to fulfilling the promise of greater accountability, more transparency, and delivering better services. Institutions like the State Agency for Local Self-

Governance and Inter-Ethnic Relations can continue its support for decentralization and articulate a policy on interethnic relations that includes a greater number of citizens in decision-making processes. The policy makers, civil society, and citizens must continue to struggle against corruption, improve safety and security in their neighborhoods, and ensure that the rights of all citizens of Kyrgyzstan are respected and upheld.

While the KRTI program is closing, Kyrgyzstan will not be alone in the ongoing transition. The United States Government and the international community remain committed to supporting continued development. Efforts to bolster the role of civil society, improve Kyrgyzstan's public institutions, and strengthen its economy will build on the seeds planted over the past three years.

Without question, the most important legacy of KRTI's support is the capacity, innovation, and momentum created by KRTI's partners. The legacy of the past three years

will continue in the day-to-day work of civil servants who ensure residents have equal access to essential services, and locally elected deputies who break with the status quo and publicly account for their budgets. It will be demonstrated by civil society calling for greater government transparency and standing up for the rights of vulnerable populations. The program's legacy includes the individuals who worked on the KRTI program, and who will be among the next generation of leaders in this country, as they move beyond the challenges of the transition and begin delivering on the promises of democracy.

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC TRANSITION INITIATIVE (KRTI)

